

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A valve shield comprising a shaped sheet of material adapted to be affixed to the annulus of a valve and adapted to extend over at least a portion of at least one leaflet of the valve so as to assist or replace the closing function of that valve leaflet.

2. A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to prevent leaflet prolapse.

3. A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the sheet of material is crescent shaped.

4. A valve shield according to claim 3 wherein the portion of the sheet of material extending over at least a portion of the at least one leaflet includes at least one opening therein.

5. A valve shield according to claim 3 wherein the portion of the sheet of material extending over at least a portion of the at least one leaflet is substantially solid.

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6. A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to be fastened to the annulus of the valve with sutures.

7. A valve shield according to claim 6 wherein the sheet of material includes preformed holes for receiving the suture.

8. A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to be fastened to the annulus of the valve with staples.

9. A valve shield according to claim 8 wherein the sheet of material includes staples formed integral therewith.

10. A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises biological material.

11. A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises pericardium.

12. A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises non-biological material.

13. A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the material is round and includes at least one opening therein.

14. A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the shaped sheet of material comprises a wire frame.

15. A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the shaped sheet of material comprises a crescent shape with a mid-line projection adapted to support a second leaflet against prolapse.

16. A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to extend over at least two leaflets.

5 17. A valve shield according to claim 16 wherein the sheet of material includes at least one opening therein.

10 18. A method for reducing regurgitation in a valve having a plurality of leaflets, said method comprising:

providing a valve shield comprising a shaped sheet of material; and

15 affixing the valve shield to the annulus of the valve so that it extends over at least a portion of at least one leaflet of the valve so as to assist or replace the closing function of that valve leaflet.